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DIGITAL PRIVACY PRACTICES AMONG FEMALE FACEBOOK USERS IN ALGERIA: A VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN LIGHT OF GENDERED AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract
The rapid proliferation of social media platforms constitutes a worldwide phenomenon, yet it is inextricably linked to fundamental challenges in digital privacy management—particularly in contexts where conservative cultural norms intersect with entrenched gender roles. This study aims to explore the perceptions and practices of digital privacy among female Facebook users in Algeria, and to analyze the influence of gendered and socio-cultural factors on the everyday strategies employed to negotiate and manage digital boundaries. The research adopts a qualitative design grounded in virtual ethnography (Netnography), encompassing digital participant observation and structured online interviews with two participants from the northern and southern regions of Algeria, conducted over a two-week period in May 2025. Data were analyzed through inductive thematic analysis, with strict adherence to ethical standards and systematic documentation of researcher positionality.

The findings reveal that participants employ complex negotiation strategies, including the construction of multiple digital identities, precision-targeted audience customization for published content, and preemptive self-censorship. Privacy, it emerges, is not managed as an abstract individual right but rather as a "relational responsibility," shaped through the interplay of familial pressures, reputational norms, and community surveillance. A pronounced "privacy paradox" was also observed, manifesting as a tension between awareness of digital risks and the continued, active engagement with the platform. The study concludes that digital privacy in the Algerian context is a dynamic process at the intersection of technological architectures and social formations—one that necessitates the development of gender-sensitive privacy policies, contextually informed digital literacy programs, and institutional protective mechanisms cognizant of local complexities.

Keywords: Digital Privacy; Virtual Ethnography; Gender; Facebook; Socio-Cultural Context.

1. Introduction

The accelerating pace of digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the contours of social interaction, rendering social media platforms a hybrid space that blurs the boundaries between private and public life. Within this framework, digital privacy has emerged as a research axis of considerable significance—particularly in societies characterized by conservative socio-cultural structures in which traditional norms governing family, reputation, and gender roles interact, often in friction, with the dynamics of digital platforms. The existing literature consistently indicates that women in Arab contexts face compounded pressures in managing their digital presence, given that their practices are frequently bound up with societal expectations concerning "digital honor" and familial oversight (Allen, 2000).
The evolution of social media and information technology has given rise to what are commonly termed virtual communities—spaces sustained primarily by the interactions of users who establish personal accounts through which communication and engagement with others has become markedly faster and more

accessible than before. Social media has, in consequence, become a standard mode of communication, not merely in public life but equally in the private sphere, reshaping social, economic, and political relations in far-reaching ways.

The dynamism of social networking sites now affords users considerable latitude for the free expression of opinion and the sharing of personal details, correspondence, and open discussion. This affordance, however, compels users to disclose personal data—whether in pursuit of online services or the establishment of new relationships. Such interaction through social networks has led users to share large quantities of personal information with a broad and often indeterminate audience, yet many do not experience this as a meaningful threat. What can be characterized as a beneficial, productive digital presence has led users to overlook the risks attendant upon self-presentation and the exposure of personal data—the most specific form of privacy—for the internet enables, directly or indirectly, intrusion into the privacy of users, whether with or without their conscious awareness. Indeed, the more developed the capacities of the internet and communication technology, the deeper and more pervasive this intrusion becomes (Comblez, n.d.).
According to the United Nations, we inhabit the "digital age," an era fueled by "data," which British mathematician Clive Humby famously described in 2006 as "the new oil" (Gstrein & Beaulieu, n.d.). This new digital world appears to operate without settled rules, giving the impression of being under the control of anyone who chooses to engage with it—as though, the moment a user connects, anything becomes possible. Yet this ostensibly boundless world is not entirely free; coexistence remains a necessity even on the web, risks are omnipresent, and norms of responsible conduct are obligatory for protection against them. Among all the precautions necessary to safeguard privacy, these norms hold paramount priority (Comblez, n.d.).
Proceeding from every individual's recognized right to a private sphere—legally and normatively enshrined—and in view of the technological evolution that has produced a digital society wherein the human being has transitioned from the status of actor in real social life to that of "user," new challenges of publication and non-publication have emerged in an era of radical exposure. The concept of digital privacy thus arose within an information society in which data had come to circulate widely, both intentionally and inadvertently. While the evolution of social media carries substantial benefits, its darker dimension represents an unmistakable challenge to user privacy and an encroachment on personal data threatened by either uncontrolled dissemination or third-party exploitation. Social web platforms have increasingly begun marketing user data to targeted third parties (Fleming, 2021).

Privacy, understood as a socially constructed value within the boundaries of the information society, is a multidimensional problem distinguished by varying social frameworks. Its interpretations have grown increasingly complex, particularly as they pertain to social networking sites, which have altered the management of personal data by facilitating the reproduction and dissemination of information (Kitsiou et al., 2016). Millions of users worldwide disclose vast quantities of personal information in an environment largely devoid of recognized safety norms and practices, and yet many individuals continue to share aspects of their private lives, drawing on the trust built through the strong ties formed among friends embedded in these networks (Fadhil, 2019).

Our data are visibly embedded in our digital interactions—in our likes, shopping behaviors, and expressed inclinations, in our comments and what we choose to reveal with each click and each act on the networks. Data are stored somewhere and subsequently put to use. This reality has facilitated the widespread adoption of the so-called free-to-use model of social media platforms, inducing users to overlook what awaits them; by accepting terms of service—which most users never read—they enter into what might be described as the challenge of use. As the aphorism has it: "If you are not paying for it, you are not the customer; you are the product being sold" (Taipale, 2018, p. 56).

On Facebook, the number of monthly active users surpassed three billion in 2024, cementing the platform's position at the apex of the social media landscape. More than two decades after its founding, the network continues to dominate the social media scene. Women occupy a significant portion of this digital space, both influencing and being influenced by the content that circulates—whether linguistic, visual, or auditory—and this space has opened new avenues for women's voices and their participation in social, educational, commercial, and political life (Allen, 2000, p. 1178).

Through their presence in virtual space and the establishment of personal accounts across various social networks, women expose their personal data—whether by deliberate choice or through their consumptive behaviors—and are correspondingly subjected to breach, threat, harassment, and forms of social surveillance, as well as attacks on their privacy. Women are presumed to be more accountable for their personal behavior than their male counterparts; the complex gender normativity that pervades the real world is equally present in the online world, and women's privacy is more vulnerable, with the characteristics of the real world mapping onto the virtual (Allen, 2000, p. 1178). This vulnerability is compounded by users' lack of familiarity with the privacy laws and policies of social networking platforms, rooted in educational and cultural factors, limited access to information, and the technical opacities of what lies behind the screen—a condition described in contemporary media scholarship as digital illiteracy.

This openness to new media simultaneously affords women considerable freedom to enter virtual space, establishing an oppositional arena within which to advocate, and thereby to liberate themselves from the exclusions imposed by elites and institutions that monopolize traditional public space (Bouamama, 2019, p. 313).

Despite the growing volume of research on digital privacy globally, a notable gap persists in qualitative studies that explore the everyday practices of privacy negotiation in the Algerian context—particularly from an ethnographic perspective that bridges the technical, the gendered, and the local. Against this backdrop, the study poses the following central research question:

How do gendered and socio-cultural contexts shape digital privacy management practices among female Facebook users in Algeria?

Three subsidiary objectives derive from this overarching question:
1. To analyze users' perceptions of digital privacy and their motivations for disclosing personal data.
2. To map the everyday strategies adopted by users to manage digital boundaries and respond to potential threats.
3. To interpret the influence of social, religious, and gender norms on the formation of privacy practices.

The study's theoretical significance lies in its contribution to grounding the concept of "networked privacy" in a non-Western context, while its applied significance resides in the actionable insights it offers to digital policymakers, platform developers, and gender-sensitive media literacy programs.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 The Evolution of Digital Privacy

The concept of privacy has undergone considerable conceptual migration—from an emphasis on physical isolation, to a regulatory perspective of selective control, to what Petronio (2002) theorizes as Communication Privacy Management (CPM). CPM posits that individuals manage their information through dynamic boundary rules influenced by perceived risks, benefits, and relational context. In the digital era, Marwick and Boyd (2014) introduced the concept of "networked privacy," asserting that privacy is not achieved through isolation but through ongoing negotiation over the flow of information within

complex, overlapping networks. Nissenbaum (2010) further advanced the notion of "contextual integrity," linking information protection to the social norms operative within each communicative context.

Earlier scholarship on privacy in social networking sites drew substantially on the theoretical frameworks of Westin and Altman. Westin defined privacy as the individual's right to determine who may access their information, and when (Kitsiou et al., 2016, p. 2). Altman (1975), for his part, characterized it as "selective control of access to the self or to one's group," centering on the regulation of access to the self and identifying multiple psychological functions served by privacy: personal autonomy (freedom from manipulation by others and control over one's own life), emotional release or respite, self-evaluation (space for processing and assessing experience), and limited, protected communication that builds trust and intimacy (Trepte & Reinecke, 2011).

Livingstone (2008) contends that privacy is not about the disclosure of certain types of information per se but about control—about who knows what about us. Different individuals may hold different conceptions of what constitutes private information, which is precisely why privacy cannot be fully preserved by any individual actor. Marwick and Boyd (2014) similarly argued that when discussing privacy on social media, it must be approached as "networked privacy." Petronio (2002) elaborated on privacy turbulence, privacy ownership, and privacy boundaries as constitutive elements of CPM (Sheldon et al., 2019). Clarke (1999) observed that "privacy is often regarded as a moral or legal right" (Bélanger & Crossler, 2011, p. 1018).

Informational privacy, in turn, is defined as "the ability to control who collects and disseminates information about the self or one's group, and under what conditions." It is profoundly shaped by the ways in which modern societies collect, store, and process personal information; and since the advent of the internet, a vast array of personal information has become accessible through online databases, search engines, and social networking sites (Trepte & Reinecke, 2011, p. 63).

Digital privacy on social networking sites is understood in this paper, following the work of Acquisti and colleagues, as "the non-negotiable right of the individual to control how their personal information is obtained, processed, distributed, shared, and used by any other entity" (Kitsiou et al., 2016, p. 2).

2.2 Gender and Personal Data in Digital Space

Comparative research consistently demonstrates that digital space does not exist apart from the reproduction of prevailing gender structures; on the contrary, it reconstructs them through new mechanisms of surveillance, stigmatization, and digital coercion. Women in conservative societies bear a heightened moral burden in managing the "digital reputation" of their families, which drives them to adopt complex defensive strategies—employing pseudonyms, restricting friend lists, and exercising stringent self-censorship over published content.

Personal data encompasses any information pertaining to an individual's name, age, place of residence, profession, civil status, educational background, financial standing, physical appearance, hobbies, and interests. Personal data refers broadly to any information that identifies an individual, directly or indirectly; not all personal data falls within the domain of privacy—professional information, for instance, does not. The right to privacy, in this sense, is the capacity to retain a measure of intimacy, including the right not to be surveilled or to have certain actions disclosed (Comblez, n.d.).

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), adopted on 14 April 2018, defines personal data in Article 4(1) as "any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person" (Mekawi, 2022, p. 9).

A necessary distinction must be drawn between personal data protection and the right to privacy: privacy primarily entails the preservation of confidentiality and the prevention of intrusion into what is considered the intimate sphere, through the protection of certain personal data in a manner that prevents the dissemination of information revealing private life (Al-Ashqar & Jabbour, 2018, p. 22).

To determine when or how a person may be identified, all possible means of identification must be taken into account—means accessible to the data controller or to any other party who might reasonably gain access to them. The French legislation enacted in 1978 addressed the protection of nominative information, circumscribing the scope of its application to any information directly and unambiguously pointing to an individual's identity. This law was subsequently amended in 2004 to keep pace with technological developments that have rendered the exposure and identification of individuals possible through technologies and software capable of cross-referencing and analyzing data. Accordingly, the scope of French law expanded, adopting the phrase "information of a personal character" to pave the way for the protection of non-nominative data—opening a broader field of protection, albeit at the cost of greater interpretive ambiguity (Al-Ashqar & Jabbour, 2018, pp. 75–77).

New categories of data have also emerged, encompassing habits and preferences, social circles and friendships, political and religious beliefs, physical inclinations, behavior, and surrounding environment. Alongside these psychological and social data, modern technologies now collect and store immense quantities of information about our bodies—what is known as biometrics—including voiceprints, iris scans, fingerprints, genetic characteristics, and distinctive facial features, extending even to the monitoring of physical interactions that reveal emotional states through what are termed emotion surveillance systems (Abd al-Fattah, 2019, pp. 7–8).

2.3 The Algerian Socio-Cultural Context

Algerian society is distinguished by the convergence of religious, familial, and tribal norms in shaping social behavior—a convergence that finds expression in digital practices. Local studies indicate that women's presence in virtual space is frequently subject to implicit or explicit surveillance, with self-disclosure linked to the risk of social stigma or familial intervention (Mes'ad & Nwari, 2022; Drim, 2021). This dynamic is reflected in the adoption of everyday negotiation practices that effectively redefine privacy as a "relational responsibility" rather than an absolute individual right.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

The study employs a qualitative methodology grounded in virtual ethnography (Netnography), a design well-suited to studying digital cultures and practices in their natural context. This approach enables the researcher to engage in digital participant observation, analyze everyday interactions, and apprehend contextual meanings without artificially isolating the phenomenon from its virtual environment.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

Three principal instruments were employed in data collection:

Digital Participant Observation: Monitoring the activities, posts, comments, and interactions of the participant sample over a two-week period (1–15 May 2025), with digital field notes documented throughout.

Semi-Structured Interviews: In-depth interviews conducted via Facebook Messenger, lasting 60–90 minutes each, focused on perceptions of privacy, protective strategies, and experiences with privacy violations.

Archival Data: Analysis of public posts, visible privacy settings, and patterns of digital interaction.

In-depth ethnographic interviews were conducted with female Facebook users to investigate issues pertaining to the privacy of personal data, information disclosure behaviors on social networks, and awareness of the associated risks. A close relationship with participants was cultivated to build trust and to maximize the depth and richness of the information gathered.

Participant No.	Date of Online Interview	Time of Online Interview	Interview Duration
01	7 May 2025	21:30	1 hour
02	15 May 2025	22:30	1.5 hours

3.3 Sample and Selection Criteria

Two purposive samples of Facebook users in Algeria were selected, representing geographic diversity (north/south) and social variation, according to the following criteria:

Daily activity on the platform for a period of not less than one year; explicit consent to participate with a guarantee of confidentiality; and representation of two distinct orientations toward digital identity—one using a real identity and one using a pseudonym.

Given that the total population of Facebook users cannot be enumerated due to the platform's scale, content analysis was conducted from the position of a Facebook community member and active user. The Algerian Facebook page "Derrière Chaque" was selected as the research site. This is a public page with 3.3 million followers as of 2025—one of the largest Algerian pages—followed by diverse age and social groups from across the country and abroad. The page addresses a wide range of issues and follows events within Algeria and internationally, with particular attention to topics affecting Algerian society. The page comprises users of both sexes; for this study, two female followers of the page were selected. A Facebook friendship was established with each, which enabled us to observe them in the context of interaction within the virtual public sphere—through observation, immersion, and electronic interviews.

Name on Profile	Educational Level	Region	Marital Status	Age	Participant No.
Aya Benabdallah (ep lns)	Bachelor's – Clinical Psychology	Blida (North)	Married	25	01
Aline Chahd	Master's – Political Science / Bachelor's – English	Biskra (South)	Married	34	02

4. The Netnographic Study

To understand the dynamics of personal data privacy among the female Facebook users studied, an effort was made to comprehend their digital experience within the virtual environment through an analysis of their everyday platform practices. Through sustained observation of the study participants over the course of the research period, an attempt was made to understand the socio-cultural contexts shaping Algerian women's understanding of digital privacy, the threats they encounter, and the means by which they seek to protect themselves.

4.1 Profile Descriptions of Study Participants

Participant 01 – Aya Benabdellah

Aya is 24 years of age, residing in the wilaya of Blida in northern Algeria, and holds a bachelor's degree in Clinical Psychology.

Profile Page Aya Benabdallah

Profile Page Description: Our observation of Aya's profile designates her as a user operating under her real identity, with her full name—Aya Benabdellah—displayed on her account, supplemented by a biographical caption reading " Hearts find peace only in the remembrance of God**.**" ("Verily, in the remembrance of God do hearts find rest") alongside an expression of personal attachment. Regarding her profile image, Aya periodically updates her profile picture and does not object to displaying her actual image. She also maintains a cover image—a plain white cover without any graphics. She has 189 followers.

Disclosure Settings: Aya lists her place of residence (Blida) and her place of study (Ali Lounici University, Affroun, Blida 2). She shares her interests in books and novels and displays her marital status (married). She does not share contact information such as her phone number or email address.

Privacy Settings: The user locks her profile, hides her friends list, and customizes the visibility of her posts. Posts, Comments, and Interactions through Virtual Immersion: Aya publishes a variety of content, including cultural material, proverbs, and reflective writings—she is a fiction writer. She also posts material related to her field of specialization in psychology and shares content jointly with friends and family. She accesses her Facebook account on an approximately daily basis.

On 2 May, she updated her profile picture, posting a black-and-white photograph of a young child with a finger in their mouth. The image attracted affectionate reactions from her friends—expressed through emojis and animated hearts—to which she responded using her personalized avatar.
We observed a close relationship between Aya and her mother; on 7 May, she published a status update featuring the French phrase: "Toujours fière de ma maman, elle est la meilleure femme de tous les temps" ("Always proud of my mother, she is the best woman of all time"). A friend commented: "May God grant her healing and a long life," to which Aya responded: "May God protect you too, and grant you long life as well."
Aya also posts informational content related to her academic specialization; on 8 May, we observed her sharing a post on child-rearing, addressing inadvisable parental practices. She further commemorates family occasions: on 11 May, marking her father's birthday, she composed a heartfelt tribute declaring her father her steadfast support and praying for God's blessings upon him. The post drew widespread engagement from her friends' circle, expressed through comments. On the same day, she posted a photograph of herself with her child, expressing maternal pride in a Derija (Algerian colloquial) verse.
On 12 May, Aya commemorated the first anniversary of her grandfather's passing, writing: "The pain is in the moment your grandfather becomes a memory, and when you speak of him, you begin with 'My grandfather, may God have mercy on his soul.'" Aya interacts with her friends primarily through comments, employing a register that blends Modern Standard Arabic with Algerian colloquial dialect, and draws upon the range of interactive tools afforded by Facebook—including her avatar and emojis—to express her emotional states during virtual interaction.

Participant 02 – Aline Chahd
Profile Page Description: Our observation of Aline's profile designates her as a user operating under a pseudonym; she uses a non-real name on her Facebook account. Aline is 43 years of age, residing in the wilaya of Biskra in southern Algeria, and holds a bachelor's degree in English Language and a master's degree in Political Science.
Profile Image: Aline periodically updates her profile picture, currently displaying an image of a woman's hand holding red roses. Her cover image depicts a cluster of pearls against pink satin fabric. She has 91 followers.

Profile Page Aline Chahed

Disclosure Settings: Aline maintains a relatively restrained demographic profile, listing only selected data such as her place of origin and current residence under her profile information, along with some general interests including television programs, films, books, and public pages. Her profile image is not a photograph of herself.
Privacy Settings: The user locks her profile, customizes the visibility of her posts, and hides her friends list.

Posts, Comments, and Interactions through Virtual Immersion: Aline uses her Facebook page to communicate and interact with peers and to follow current news and daily events. Daily observation of the participant's page revealed that she does not update her status daily and is not particularly active in posting. On 8 May, she posted a humorous video reflecting her experience as a mother of young children—a relatable portrayal of the challenges all mothers face with their children's hyperactivity. One of her friends, also a mother, commented: "This is exactly what my daughter does—she ran out into the road, God protect our children." Aline replied: "I know... keep your eyes on her... God protect her."
We observed that Aline and her Facebook friends tend to comment in Arabic mixed with local dialect, supplementing their posts and comments with emoji symbols to reinforce meaning and convey emotional states.

5. Analysis of User Interactions via Facebook

5.1 Conceptions of Personal Data Privacy among Algerian Female Users

Users' views of their personal data privacy are shaped by factors principally related to cultural, social, and religious backgrounds, educational levels, and degrees of technological awareness.
The concept of "privacy" carries varying connotations among the users in the present study, shaped by consideration of the geographic and social environment in which they live and the extent to which that environment accepts what they publish on their personal Facebook pages. Users' awareness also diverges on an individual basis, according to their experiences within the digital world; both Aya and Aline perceive that data privacy is violated differently for women and men in digital space, in accordance with gendered norms.

5.2 Everyday Practices on the Platform

Aya reports using Facebook more than five times daily and employing it most frequently for direct messaging. Aline, by contrast, uses Facebook primarily for browsing and keeping up with the pages she follows.
Aline states: "I share clear information such as my nationality, language, and religion, but I do not share sensitive details about myself—even though surveillance algorithms already know a great deal about me." Aya, on the other hand, shares her place of study and university, her place of residence, and her academic specialization publicly, while keeping her phone number and email address private and reraining from interacting with strangers on Facebook.
Aline explains her choice to use a pseudonym: "I previously used my real name, which allowed everyone to access my account and put me in contact with people I had no wish to interact with. The pseudonym allows me to draw a circle around my personal relationships." Aya, conversely, sees the use of her real name as facilitating recognition.

5.3 Engagement with Threats and Privacy Policy

Female Facebook users are required to make consequential decisions about how they manage personal information and to develop strategies for risk management and safety in a digital space that may be hostile to their presence. Aline observes: "For me, I consider that not everyone has the right to see my personal photograph, particularly given the possibility of saving it—this does not suit me. It is not a question of prohibition or of causing discomfort to family members; it is a personal choice, conditioned by others' disrespectful behaviors and by taking others' mindsets into account."
Aya argues that women's choices regarding name and photograph on social networking sites differ from those of men, noting that women generally prefer not to expose their personal data through social networks—though she cautions against overgeneralization, observing that some women regard the disclosure of their identity as entirely unremarkable.
Aya discloses that she has been subjected to harassment and threats via Facebook on multiple occasions and holds that women are more vulnerable to harassment and digital coercion than men, for reasons related

to sexual and financial motivations. She does not follow specific practices to protect her data but does alter privacy settings by changing her password and phone number. Aline typically sets all her personal information to "friends only," ensuring that only her friends can view her details. She also periodically adjusts her privacy settings, particularly features such as the permission to allow anyone to post on her personal account.

5.4 The Influence of Socio-Cultural Context on Users' Privacy Practices

The socio-cultural context exerts a palpable influence on how female users perceive and manage personal data privacy on social networking platforms, with privacy norms varying across cultures and societies, and privacy practices shaped by cultural values, beliefs, and environmental and social norms.

Algerian women's use of social media platforms is governed by cultural norms, religion, customs, and family values—factors that shape the behavior and practices of women in social networks. This usage is constrained to a greater degree by gendered norms linked to a patriarchal authority that is hostile to women, whereby the freedom of women's participation in virtual space is suppressed and regulated. The personal accounts of Algerian female users are subject to surveillance; their social relationships and published content are monitored. The image of women in Arab social imagination is bound up with the concept of honor—a woman may be subjected to social stigma simply for criticizing a prevailing situation, expressing a dissenting opinion, posting a photograph of herself, or sharing unconventional ideas. Many female users therefore resort to entering the virtual world under an identity other than their real one, one that conforms to the prevailing socio-cultural context.

Aline reflects: "Society imposes on women, in particular, the type of subjects they are permitted to address, the type of friends they are allowed to make and their religious affiliations—to the point that restrictions are placed on women's opinions on many issues, where a distinctly masculine tendency emerges to attack, silence, and return the woman to the herd."

She adds: "Women's insistence on concealing personal data is rooted in the programming instilled in women's minds across generations, particularly in Eastern societies. With access available, women tend to preserve their privacy as a protection against the social judgments leveled at the liberated woman; they are consequently freer in expressing themselves on published content and circulating topics."

6. Analytical Conclusions and Ethical Considerations

Data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), proceeding through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, to ensure accurate representation of contextual meanings. Ethical standards were observed through the obtaining of informed consent, the guarantee of confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms, the deletion of personal identifiers, and the encrypted storage of data. Researcher bias and positionality were systematically documented to ensure methodological transparency. This process yielded the following conclusions:

Algerian women use social media platforms for multiple purposes, including communicative, commercial, and service-related ends. Women participate in social networks through the sharing of posts, status updates, and comments. Algerian female Facebook users employ the register of everyday spoken interaction, supplemented by the various expressive symbols afforded by the platform to reinforce meaning. Users' attitudes toward information privacy and their modes of engaging with threats diverge according to their educational level, technological literacy, and the context in which they live.

The patriarchal authority inherited within Algerian society constitutes a significant factor in shaping the practices of personal data disclosure among Algerian women on social networking sites, as evidenced by the caution with which Algerian women approach the disclosure of personal data on Facebook.

Observation and interviews further revealed three key thematic axes at the intersection of everyday practices, gendered context, and socio-cultural environment:

Privacy as "Relational Responsibility" Rather than Individual Right:

Participants did not define privacy in legal or technical terms but rather as an "ethical and familial obligation." Participant 2 observed: "This is not about me alone but about my family and their reputation. Any photograph or comment might be read in an unintended manner, affecting everyone." This reflects a shift from the model of individual privacy (Westin) to that of relational boundary management (CPM), in which information is managed as a social commodity carrying high symbolic costs.

Everyday Strategies of Digital Boundary Negotiation:
Participants adopted a range of tactical practices to manage information flows. With respect to multiple digital identities, Participant 2 employed a pseudonym and a symbolic image to "draw a circle of safe relationships," while Participant 1 preferred her real identity to facilitate professional and familial interaction. As regards dynamic audience customization, participants periodically adjusted privacy settings, employed "close friends/family/strangers" lists, and deleted content after a specified period of time. With respect to coded language and self-censorship, participants used emojis, religious quotations, and avoided sensitive topics publicly—a practice consistent with the principle of "contextual integrity" (Nissenbaum, 2010).

The Influence of Gendered and Socio-Cultural Context:
The data demonstrated that digital practices are shaped through the intersection of patriarchal pressures and familial surveillance. Participant 2 observed: "Society dictates to women what they may post, with whom they may interact, and even what opinion they may hold on public issues. The pseudonym affords me breathing space." Conversely, Participant 1 experiences recurrent harassment despite using her real identity—reinforcing the hypothesis that women are more exposed to digital accountability on the basis of asymmetric gendered norms. The "privacy paradox" was also clearly manifest: awareness of technical risks coexisting with continued posting, driven by the need for social belonging and symbolic capital.

7. Discussion

The study's findings align with the literature on networked privacy, which affirms that digital privacy is not violated solely in a technical sense but is socially reconstructed through everyday practices of negotiation and self-surveillance (Marwick & Boyd, 2014). The Algerian context, however, adds a distinctive gendered dimension: privacy management is transformed into an unacknowledged form of "digital emotional labor," in which women bear a heightened moral burden to maintain cultural conformity while avoiding social stigma.

These findings challenge the Western model of privacy—premised on individualism and institutional transparency—and highlight the need for theoretical frameworks that accommodate "relational privacy" in conservative societies. They are consistent, moreover, with earlier studies in Arab contexts that have documented women's adoption of flexible identity strategies as a defensive mechanism against familial and societal surveillance (Bouamama, 2019).

From a practical standpoint, the findings indicate that the current privacy tools available on platforms such as Facebook are inadequate to the gendered and cultural complexities at hand: binary public/private settings do not reflect the graduated-audience dynamics of lived social reality. The Algerian legal framework (Law 18-07, 2018) likewise remains in need of effective institutional activation, accessible reporting mechanisms, and psychological and legal support for victims.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that the digital privacy practices of female Facebook users in Algeria are shaped through a dynamic intersection of technology, gender, and socio-cultural context. Privacy is no longer a fixed or merely technical concept but rather a daily negotiation process managed through flexible strategies adapted to societal pressures and the need for digital belonging.

8.1 Recommendations

At the level of digital policy: the development of contextual privacy tools enabling the management of graduated audiences, and support for a temporal-boundary feature for published content.
At the level of awareness: the design of gender-sensitive digital literacy programs focused on digital reputation management, engagement with digital coercion, and rights of reporting.
At the legal level: the activation of an independent data protection authority, the simplification of reporting procedures, and the linkage of digital protection to laws combating gender-based digital violence.
At the research level: the geographic and demographic expansion of the sample, the adoption of longitudinal designs to track the evolution of digital practices, and the conduct of gender-comparative studies.

8.2 Study Limitations

The findings are circumscribed by a qualitative sample of only two participants, which limits their statistical generalizability—however rich the contextual insights they yield. The relatively brief period of observation may also fail to capture seasonal fluctuations or emergent digital crises. This study nonetheless constitutes a foundational step toward grounding digital privacy scholarship in the Algerian context, and calls for further in-depth qualitative research.

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